

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ADDIS 12411 170855Z
ACTION H-03

INFO OCT-01 AF-04 EUR-08 ISO-00 AID-01 SS-07 NSC-06 /030 W
----- 040924 /11

R 170705Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2061
INFO /AMCONSUL ASMARA 7790
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY MOGACISCIO
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 12411

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OREP (RICHARDSON WILLAIM), PFOR ET US
SUBJ: STAFFDEL RICHARDSON CONVERSATION WITH FONMIN KIFLE

REF: STATE 274215

1. STAFFDEL WILLIAM RICHARDSON, ACCOMPANIED BY CHARGE, CALLED ON FONMIN KIFLE WODAJO DEC 13. DURING COURSE OF 45-MINUTE CONVERSATION, KIFLE WAS GENERALLY FORTHCOMING AND RELAXED, ALTHOUGH HE OFTEN CHOSE HIS WORDS CAREFULLY. CONVERSATION COVERED BROAD RANGE OF TOPICS INCLUDING US-ETHIOPIAN BILATERAL RELATIONS, RELATIONS WITH SOCIALIST COUNTRIES, TFAI (BEING REPORTED SEPTTEL), US MILITARY ASSISTANCE, ERITREA AND HUMAN RIGHTS.

2. RICHARDSON OPENED CONVERSATION BY ASKING KIFLE FOR HIS ASSESSMENT OF US-ETHIOPIAN BILATERAL RELATIONS. KIFLE FIRST EXPRESSED REGRET THAT SENATOR CLARK HAD NOT BEEN ABLE VISIT ADDIS. HE NOTED THAT ONLY TIME AVAILABLE TO SENATOR WOULD HAVE COINCIDED WITH OR IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWED AFRO-ASIAN PEOPLE'S SOLIDARTIY (AAPSO) MEETING IN ADDIS IN LATE OCTOBER-EARLY NOVEMBER
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IN SUPPORT OF PEOPLES OF SOUTHERN AFRICA, AND EPMG DID NOT BELIEVE THIS WOULD HAVE BEEN BEST TIME FOR USEFUL VISIT. NO OTHER TIME, HOWEVER, WAS SUITABLE FOR SENATOR CLARK. HE THEN WENT ON TO SAY THAT THERE HAD BEEN UNDENIABLE "TRANSFORMATION" IN OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS. BOTH SIDES HAD BEEN LOOKING AT

THE FORMER RELATIONSHIP AND SOME ADJUSTMENTS HAD BEEN MADE, WHICH, ON THE WHOLE WERE SATISFACTORY. US HAD DEMONSTRATED UNDERSTANDING OF IMPLICATION OF CHANGES IN ETHIOPIA, HAD SHOWN NATURITY, AND ITS "PROFESSIONALS" HAD BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN BRINGING ABOUT THIS DEVELOPMENT.

3. ASKED HOW HE SAW THE DEVELOPMENT OF EXPENDING FOREIGN RELATIONS, E.G., THOSE WITH USSR, KIFLE REPLIED THAT IN PAST, ETHIOPIA HAD A TRADITIONAL IMBALANCE IN ITS EXTERANL RELATIONS IN FAVOR OF WEST. SINCE BEGINNING OF REVOLUTION, ETHIOPIA HAD SOUTHT TO DIVERSIFY THESE RELATIONS, PARTICULARLY ECONOMIC AND TRADE, AND TO "RESTOR" IMBALANCE WITH SOCIALIST COUNTRIES. THIS, HOWEVER, DID NOT MEAN ETHIOPIA BY THIS PROCESS WAS REPLACING ITS RELATIONS WITH OTHERS. SPECIFICALLY ASKED ABOUT MILITARY RELATIONS WITH USSR, HE RESTRICTED HIS REPLY TO SAYING ETHIOPIANS SOUGHT BALANCED RELATIONS IN AS MANY AREAS AS POSSIBLE.

4. TURNING TO US MILITARY ASSISTANCE, KIFLE WAS ASKED WHETHER US SHOULD ATTACH ANY SIGNIFICANCE TO EPMG'S RECENT DOUBLE REJECTION OF FMS CREDIT OFFERS. KIFLE SAID TERMS OF OFFERS WERE NOT ACCEPTABLE. EPMG HAD HOPED FOR CONCESSIONAL RATES. WE SHOULD NOT ATTACH ANY OTHER MEANING TO EPMG'S REJECTION.

5. WAS KIFLE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT SOLUTION TO ERITREAN PROBLEM? KIFLE SAID THERE WAS NOT SUFFICIENT COHESION AMONG INSURGENTS AND THEREFORE A LACK OF IDENTITY OF CONFIDENTIAL

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VIEWS TO MEET EPMG INITIATIVES. ERITREA WAS A DIFFICULT PROBLEM. OTHER COUNTRIES WERE INVOLVED (HE MENTIONED IRAQ AND SYRIA SPECIFICALLY). THEY WERE HELPING INSURGENTS AND INTERFERING WITH A PEACEFUL SOLUTION. IRAQ AND SYRIA WERE "IDEOLOGICAL EXPEORTERS" -- THEY WERE ATTEMPTING TO EXPORT BAATHIST PHILOSOPHY TO AFRICA.

6. AS FINAL NOTE, RICHARDSON NOTED CURRENT CONGRESSIONAL INTEREST IN HUMAN RIGHTS IN CONNECTION WITH EXONOMIC AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE. HE INDICATED HE WAS UNAWARE WHETHER THE CONGRESS WOULD APPLY THE TWO HUMAN RIGHTS PROVISIONS TO ETHIOPIA. KIFLE SAID HE WAS AWARE OF PROVISIONS OF RECENT US LEGISLATION WHICH HAD BEEN BROUGHT TO EPMG'S ATTENTION. HE HOPED USG, AFTER THOUGHTFUL APPRECIATION OF REVOLUTIONARY SITUATIONS, WOULD NOT FIND IT NECESSARY TO APPLY THEM TO ETHIOPIA.

7. DID KIFLE HAVE ANY THOUGHTS FOR NEW ADMINISTRATION?
AFTER COMMENTING THAT HE HAD CONSIDERABLE DIFFICULTY
ADVISING HIS OWN GOVERNMENT, HE SAID HE HOPED NEW
ADMINISTRATION WOULD CONTINUE TO BENEFIT FROM ADVICE
OF PROFESSIONAL PEOPLE (AMBASSADOR HUMMEL FOR EXAMPLE
HAD DONE SUPERB JOB), WOULD NOT OVERREACT, AND WOULD
ACT WITH ETHIOPIANS TO KEEP PROBLEMS WITHIN REASONABLE
BOUNDS. KIFLE REGRETTED THAT RICHARDSON HAD NOT BEEN
ABLE TO SEE ANY DIRG MEMBER BUT SAID THEY HAD BEEN
COMPLETELY TIED UP FOR SOME TIME. HE HIMSELF HAD BEEN
ABLE TO SEE CHAIRMAN ONLY ONCE SINCE HIS MOST RECENT
RETURN FROM NEW YORK (END OF NOVEMBER).

8. RICHARDSON REQUESTS THAT COPY OF THIS
TELEGRAM BE FORWARDED TO HIM WASHINGTON BY DEPT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, MEETINGS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 17 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: CunninFX
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976ADDIS12411
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760464-0672
From: ADDIS ABABA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761231/aaaabama.tel
Line Count: 131
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION H
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 STATE 274215
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: CunninFX
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 MAY 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <05 MAY 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <03 SEP 2004 by CunninFX>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: STAFFDEL RICHARDSON CONVERSATION WITH FONMIN KIFLE
TAGS: OREP, PFOR, ET, US, (RICHARDSON, WILLIAM), (KIFLE WODAJJO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006